

Rainbow Bridge by GreenLily474

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Summary: Will and Eleven say goodbye to their beloved dogs

Rainbow Bridge

August 1989

"We don't have to do this today if you aren't ready yet, Buddy," said Hopper as he put his hand on Will's shoulder.

"I'm not ready and I never will be," said Will. "But Chester's suffering and he's been suffering for a long time. It's not fair to make him keep suffering because I'm not ready to say goodbye."

Will stroked Chester's head. The elderly dog lifted his head. Chester had gone blind and deaf in the last year, but he still had his sense of smell. He had developed gout and struggled to walk or stand. Dustin had helped Will build a lever to help take Chester outside for what was the closest thing he could do to a walk.

"Would you like a couple minutes alone with him before we call the doctor back in, Baby?" asked Joyce. Will nodded. He tried to say yeah, but his mouth formed the word and nothing came out.

Will felt his mother, step father, sister, brother, best friend, and girlfriend each pat him on the back as they left, but he never took his eyes off his long time companion.

"You've been fighting the good fight for so long, haven't you, boy?" said Will. He leaned on the exam table and put one arm under Chester's head. He pulled the dog into an awkward hug. Chester sniffed Will and nuzzled his head.

Will thought back to the day he'd gotten Chester. He was nine years old and his parents had been divorced for a year. His father still had visitation rights, but often canceled plans. That had bothered Will at the time, but years later he would wonder why Lonnie's opinion ever mattered. It mattered a lot when he was nine, though.

Will had sat in his room crying and drawing after overhearing his mother on the phone with his father yelling at him for canceling the plans yet again. Joyce had later taken Will to the pound to pick out a dog as he'd been wanting one for a long time.

Will remembering that there were a lot of people there that day looking at dogs to adopt, but people ignored Chester. Will remembered him sitting in the kennel and sadly staring at the wall. Will felt a kinship with the dog at that moment.

Chester had instantly changed from sad to happy when they brought him home. He would follow Will everywhere. If Lonnie failed to show up for a visit or if he actually did show up, but spent the trip belittling Will and Jonathan or if Will was upset from being bullied at school, Chester always knew and was there to comfort time.

Will remembered feeling Chester's presence when he was stuck in the Upside Down for a week. He felt his dog when he hid in the house. He felt Chester when he was hiding from the Demogorgan in the Upside Down version of Castle Byers collapsed from exhaustion.

Will remembered Chester's constant companionship as he recovered from his heart surgery a couple years earlier.

Part of Will wanted to just take Chester home. Will had had the dog for half his life. The thought of Chester just being dead frightened Will, especially since he was the one making the call. But Chester had been unable to eat or drink for the past few days and he was wasting away to skin and bone.

Will sighed. He got up and called in his family, then knocked on the door to the vet's office.

"Are you ready?" asked Dr. Beal.

"No," said Will. "But he's suffering."

"Okay, the first shot I give him will make him go to sleep. Then I'll give him the shot that will stop his heart. He won't feel any pain."

"Alright," said Will as he wiped his eyes.

"You don't have to be here if you don't want to be," said Dr. Beal.

"I know," said Will. "He's been there for me all these years, I can be there for him now. You guys don't have to watch," Will said to the others.

"We know," said El. "But we're staying."

"Yeah, Bud, we're here for both of you," said Jonathan.

"Thanks," said Will.

Dr. Beal administered the initial shot. Chester instantly became limp. Will stroked his head. The Dr. Beal gave Chester the shot that stopped his heart. Will removed his hands from Chester and stared at the corpse. It wasn't his dog anymore, just a shell where Chester had once resided.

A couple of veterinary assistants took the body back to where it was be transported and cremated. Will started crying harder than he'd ever cried in his life. He was engulfed in a group hug by Joyce, Hopper, El, Jonathan, Mike, and Julie.

When he got home, Will spent several hours drawing Chester on a rainbow bridge. His mother said it reminded him of the rainbow ship he'd drawn on his 8th birthday.

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July 1993

"If she were a younger dog, we might be able to operate, but at her age any cancer treatment would be fatal."

El had been holding back tears the entire visit, but they started flowing. She knew what she had to do. The cancer on Buttons had spread too far. "It's time to say goodbye."

Her parents had called her when Buttons' condition started getting worse. She and Will had driven back to Hawkins. Her brother had been with her the day she had picked up Buttons from the pound and she wanted him to be with her at the end.

She had gotten Buttons the day after her 15th birthday and the dog had stayed with her parents when they left for college. Chester had to be put to sleep a few weeks before they left for North Western (Will had kept the ashes all those years). El wished that she had been able to take her dog with her as she would have had more time. Time with

pets was finite though and it never would have been enough.

"I'm ready," said El as Will put his arm around her.

"Do you want me to explain how it works?" asked Dr. Beal.

"Is it the same as when we said goodbye to Chester?" asked El.

"Yes."

"I remember," said El. She stroked Buttons' head. She felt her beloved dog go limp as Dr. Beal gave the first shot. The life disappeared as the second shot was administered. El hugged Will and sobbed on his shoulder as Buttons' lifeless body was taken away.

"You gave her a home, El," said Will. "She had a long happy life because you chose her to be your dog."

"I chose wisely," said El.

That night, Will made a drawing for his sister of her dog joining Chester on the rainbow bridge.

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AN: My elderly dog just passed away, so I decided to write this.